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### Review

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## Reviews.

*Selected Pianoforte Studies.* Set I., Books 1 to 4; Set II., Books 1 to 4. Progressively arranged by Franklin Taylor.

[Novello and Company, Limited.]

Not the least difficulty attending the vocation of a teacher of the pianoforte is the selection of music for his or her pupil. And is not this more especially the case in regard to technical studies? There is no dearth of such material, it is the matter of suitable selection that troubles the conscientious teacher, especially when the pupil belongs to the great majority coming under the designation 'average.' It is in order to meet such difficulty that these 'Selected Pianoforte Studies' have been compiled by Mr. Franklin Taylor, who is not only a most skilled expert in pianoforte teaching, but may be regarded as 'a guide, philosopher, and friend.' A quotation from his Preface sets forth the *raison d'être* of this useful publication:—

The present collection of Studies is designed to provide teachers with a short course of Pianoforte Technique adapted to the needs of the average pupil, the intention being to spare the teacher the labour of choosing a sufficiently varied selection from the large mass of material existing, and at the same time to ensure that the different departments of technique shall be undertaken in the order which experience has proved to be the most beneficial.

It was an excellent idea to make two selections—Set I. for pupils less naturally endowed than others, and Set II. for those of higher technical attainment. Of course, where additional studies are desired in order to develop some particular shortcoming in a pupil's technique, the larger collection edited by Mr. Taylor and well known as his 'Progressive Studies,' from which the present selections have been made, is available. The practical utility of the publication is so obvious that its adoption by many teachers may be a foregone conclusion.

*Life of Richard Wagner.* An authorised English version by William Ashton Ellis of C. F. Glasenapp's 'Das Leben Richard Wagner's.' Vol. III.

[Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.]

'Ought I to call the present volume an "English version" of Herr Glasenapp's work?' asks Mr. Ellis in his Prefatory Note. His doubt arose from the fact that 'its five hundred pages represent but a hundred of the German original.' Strictly speaking, no; but it was not worth while altering the title. The period of which he treats is indeed 'rich in psychological and æsthetic interest,' so that the expansion is welcome. It extended from the years 1849 to 1852-3, during which was developed the scheme of the *opus magnum*, which a quarter of-a-century later was realised at Bayreuth. Numerous extracts are given from the 'Correspondence of Wagner and Liszt,' also from Richard Wagner's letters to his Dresden friends, and as both these collections have been before the public for some years, we may be able to sum up many pages in a few words. From Mr. Ellis's point of view lengthy extracts were indispensable. The volume opens with a few pages concerning the fruitless visit of Wagner to Paris, in 1849, after he had been forced to leave Dresden. He wants to get to Zurich to be at peace and set to music his poem 'Siegfried's Tod,' which he calculates will take him about 'half a year'! But first came much essay writing, and then when he did set to work, he found that a 'Young Siegfried' must take precedence; and finally he thinks out a big scheme, three dramas and a prologue, so that neither of the operas is sent, as Liszt had hoped, to Weimar. A whole chapter

is devoted to Liszt and to the Princess Carolyne v. Sayn-Wittgenstein; it is a long one, but it throws a vivid light on the Wagner-Liszt correspondence, and shows us how much more Liszt would have done for Wagner had he not 'given his soul into silken bondage.' The friendship of Liszt for the composer was distasteful to the Princess; and the latter not only influenced the life of Liszt and his actions, but also his writings. In his last letter written to her three weeks before his death, Liszt signs himself 'umilissimo Schavissimo.' Of the analyses of 'Tannhäuser' and 'Lohengrin' 'much,' says our author, 'is to be assigned to the Princess.'

It was in 1852 that the German theatres began to take an interest in Wagner's operas, and for this Mr. Ellis easily accounts. Wagner was no longer at Dresden, an active object of the jealousy of Reissiger, and also 'of the two opposing camps outside, Berlin and Leipzig,' while Liszt by the production of 'Lohengrin' had aroused curiosity. In the published correspondence between Liszt and Wagner we learn something of the negotiations with various theatres, but in the present volume the story is presented in fuller detail. The delays and shabby behaviour of Leipzig in connection with 'Tannhäuser' caused great annoyance to Wagner, but at last when it was produced there in 1853 the success thereof was great. In one letter to Liszt the composer writes:—'With these Philistines, in general, I probably shan't travel far: they haven't the remotest idea of the nature and future of my works.' We often hear people say 'If only Wagner were alive now what joy it would give him to see how his works are now admired and appreciated!' But such a sentence as the above reminds us that a man of genius is conscious of his power; he knows that he is ahead of the age in which he lives, and is therefore not surprised at the indifference or hostility of the world; as with Beethoven, so was it with Wagner. In a letter to Uhlig the latter says: 'I don't live in my age at all, because I flit among you as a ghost, because the wide world is full of fools.' Wagner cycles are all the fashion now, and it is interesting to note that the first one was given by Liszt at Weimar in 1853. The 'Flying Dutchman' was performed on February 16 in that year, and a second time before the 20th, when 'Tannhäuser' was given, followed on the 26th by 'Lohengrin.'

Passing on to the 'Ring,' Mr. Ellis frankly acknowledges that 'Das Rheingold' is 'the least popular of the four sections of the "Ring," and, unlike its fellows, is scarcely ever performed purely for its own sake, *i.e.*, alone.' So far as London is concerned it has never been thus given. He does not accept the usual explanation, *viz.*, a lack of interest in the doings of mythical gods and goddesses, but accounts for it by 'the general dislike of any story that so ruthlessly displays the seamy side of human nature.' For ourselves, however, we prefer the former explanation. One point is mentioned which 'militates against more general appreciation of "Das Rheingold,"' *viz.*, the 'stringing of chains between the giants' staffs, and the hanging thereto of salvers, &c., that clink like tin as they strike each other.' The effect produced is no doubt highly ridiculous, yet we cannot think that it interferes with 'general appreciation' any more than does the dragon scene with that of 'Siegfried.'

Mr. Ellis has made what he justly deems 'no mean discovery.' The existence of two 'Siegfried's Tod' poems, the original one of 1848, and the revised one of 1852-3, identical with that of 'Götterdämmerung,' is well known, but he believes that there was an intermediate one made in 1851. The 'three different styles of diction' in the 'Götterdämmerung' first attracted attention to the matter. He intends to deal with it at length in Vol. IV.; for the present he only adduces 'the broader reasons of a faith that in my own mind already amounts to a certainty,' and from what he says with regard to *internal* evidence, he seems to have good reasons for his belief. Mr. Ellis's work has evidently been to him a labour of love, and those who have followed him thus far will look forward with eagerness to the remaining volume or volumes, for the life of the Bayreuth master is one of absorbing interest: it is more than the life of the man, it tells also the story of the decline and fall of old-fashioned Italian opera, and the rise and progress of music-drama.